1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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(*Ananas sativus;* M.: *pihto;* S.: *masa, masahti*),[a] papaws or papayas (*Carica papaya* L.; M.: *twas, tawas;* S.: *ulmak, ulumak*), avocados or alligator pears (*Persea gratissima* Gaertn.; M.: *sikya;* S.: *sikya, sariñ*), soursops (*Anona muricata* L.; M.: *dwarsap;* S.: *sapot*), guavas (*Psidium guajava* L.; M.: *sikra;* S.: *burimak*), cashews (*Anacardium occidentale* L.; M. and S.: *kasau*), and watermelons (*Citrullus vulgaris* Schrad.; M. and S.: *rayapisa*). Spanish plums (*Spondias purpurea* L.), although apparently indigenous, are rarely found, and their Indian name *ploms* comes from the English language.

The most important fruit trees of foreign origin are: Citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, sweet limes, sour limes, shaddocks, grapefruits, citrons), mangoes (*Mangifera indica* L.), breadfruits (*Artocarpus communis* syn. *incisa*), tamarinds (*Tamarindus indica* L.), and rose apples (*Eugenia jambos* L.).

GARDENS.—Around their houses many Indians cultivate also a few fruit trees and other plants. The calabash tree (*Crescentia cujete* L.; M.: *kahmi;* S.: *sutak*) is very common in these gardens; it is esteemed for the very useful kitchen receptacles obtained from its fruit. A few bushes of cotton (*Gossypium peruvianum* Cav.; M.: *wahmuk;* S.: *wahmak*), chile peppers (*Capsicum* sp.; M.: *kuma;* S.: *asmak, aÑmak*) and annatto (*Bixa orellana* L.; M.: *aulala, tmariñ;* S.: *awal*) are found near every lodge. A number of flowers are also cultivated, as the African marigolds, purple and white four-o'clocks, and the crimson hibiscus.

FISHING AND FISHING IMPLEMENTS

A very large share of the food supply of these primitive Indians is obtained from the sea, the lagoons, and the rivers. Fishing is therefore an occupation wherein both tribes have attained an unusual degree of skill. The main implements used for this purpose are harpoons, fishhooks, nets, and bows and arrows.

JAVELIN.—The javelin or throwing spear (M.: *wfisku;* S.: *sukruk*) is used in the sea, lagoons, and larger rivers. It consists of a wooden staff, from 8 to 9 feet in length, in the front end of which a sharp barbed steel head has been inserted. The staff is of strong, slender, light wood, generally of a tree called "magaleta" (M.: *sihnak, sinak;* S.: *sina*); the Ulwa, however, use for this purpose the wood of a tree called by them *pan-kuba*, which is said to be superior to the above-mentioned species. The loosely fitting steel point is from 4 to 5 inches long and is made of an old file, wherein several series of double

[a] The old authors, Exquemelin (Engl. edit.: 251), Dampier (I, 9), and M. W. (308, 310), met this fruit among the Miskito during the latter part of the seventeenth century; in those days it was also cultivated by the aborigines of the Corn Islands (Exquemelin, Engl. edit.: 114).

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441 barbs have been made with the aid of another file. Previous to the introduction of iron and steel the Indians made their spear points of pointed and barbed pieces of bamboo. A cord about 50 feet in length is attached to the point, while the other end of it is wound round a long reel of light wood, which acts as a "bob" or float, and is stuck at the distal end of the staff. These Indians call the float *kunkun*, which name is also applied by the Sumu to the balsa tree (*Ochroma lagopus* Sw.), from which it is usually made. Sometimes the red cedar (*Cedrela* sp.) or the roots of the "bobwood" tree (*Anona palustris*) are employed for this purpose by the Miskito.

The javelin is used only for the larger fishes, such as the carplike snook (M. and S.: *mopi*) and the salmonlike tarpon (M. and S.: *tapam, tahpam*) which are frequently met with in the larger rivers.

226 Two men generally work together when fishing with this implement. The one in the bow of the boat signals his companion how to steer by motioning with the hand. They glide noiselessly over the water, and when within reach of a fish, that is, about 60 feet distant from it, the bowman stands up with the spear in his right hand and aims and throws at a single fish, which he may be unable to see through the thickness of water. The only thing visible is the fish's "wake," that is, the ripple produced on the surface of the water as he swims lazily along. By that the Indian guesses the species of the fish as well as the depth at which he swims under water. It may be 2 feet. The spear is thrown in such a manner that it strikes the water almost vertically; the Indians seldom miss, for they have practiced this sport from early childhood. Upon striking the fish, the cord unwinds; harpoon and reel become detached from the staff, but they are attached to each other by the cord. The reel acts like a float and points out the whereabouts of the prize; with its aid the latter is secured. When the fish is tired, it is drawn near the canoe, killed with a stick, and hauled in. Then the staff, which is also of floatable wood, is likewise caught.

At the beginning of the rainy season the Miskito also practice this sport at night, especially in the lagoons. At such places where the fresh water comes in contact with the sea water it blazes as the fish swims along, thus indicating the latter's presence.

On dark nights the fish is also speared with the aid of a pitch-pine torch which is held by a third man in the boat. The glare of the torch attracts the fish and enables the bowman to spy his prey, which is immediately transfixed by the harpoon. This sport of fishing with a torch is practiced chiefly in November and December.

[71] The Sumu seldom employ this fishing implement as it is of little use in the small rocky streams where the bulk of this tribe lives. On the other hand, many Creoles and Ladinos living on the coast have learned from the Indians how to handle it.

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They are caught with the hook or by diving after them; some Indians will also catch the sea turtles in this manner and bring them up in their hands, but this feat is attended with danger, from bites and sharp coral. The bocatora tortoise is speckled black and yellow and is found in the larger rivers only. It lays about 20 round eggs in the sand, silt, or even in stiff earth; the eggs are inclosed in a rough calcareous parchment and are considered a great delicacy.

LANCES.—Two varieties of long spears, with fixed points, are employed for striking fish. They are not thrown, but kept in the hand while striking. These implements are found chiefly among the river Indians, Miskito as well as Sumu. The thin, strong staff, which may be from 10 to 15 feet in length, is made from the stem of a tree called by the Ladinos "cacao" (M.: *sakalpihni;* S.: *babasnak*). Of these two implements the more common one (M.: *sihnak;* S.: *suksuk*) has a harpoonlike point, similar to that of the javelin or throwing spear. The other one (M. and S.: *daka*) is provided with a pointed piece of thick wire or some other metal, which looks like a nail; for that reason it is called "clavo" by the Ladinos, who also use it in fishing.

FISHHOOKS.—Fishing with the hook (M.: *kyul;* T., P.: *kuyul;* U.: *simin*) is done chiefly by the women, children, and old men. The line is made of silk-grass fiber (*Bromelia* sp.) and is dyed black with vegetable juices, so as to render it less conspicuous. The hooks are of foreign manufacture but in former days crooked bones were used for the purpose. The Indians bait them with worms, spiders, grasshoppers, or fruits (guavas, wild figs).

At certain times of the year when the fruits of the wild fig or of other trees growing along the edge of the river begin to drop, the Indians fish without any bait at all. They flick and cast their long line about, lashing the surface of the water, and letting it sink, presently raising it with a peculiar movement of the wrist. This noise is regarded by the fish as resulting from the dropping of overhanging fruits and they will greedily snap after them and then be caught by the hook.

FISHING NETS.—A small fishing net (M.: *ilis, tan;* T.: *wilino;* P.: *dua;* U.: *yano*), made of silk-grass fiber, is used by both Miskito and Sumu. With its aid they close the mouth of narrow creeks, in order to catch the fish trying to enter the main river. Wickham (b: 238; c: 203) already mentions the use of drag nets among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido; the Indians employed it in low water in the pools scattered among the bowlders or rocks in the rapids and falls.

The cast net and the seine have also been introduced recently among the Miskito. The former especially is becoming popular. Having the folded net in his hand, the Indian throws it like a lasso upon the water in such a manner that by a single cast it becomes suspended almost to its whole width, surprising and catching the

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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227 fish on that spot; the presence of the latter is indicated to him from certain movements on the surface of the water. Lead balls or small round pebbles are attached to the edges of the net in order to keep it down in the water.

● 226 BOW AND ARROW.—Several river fishes, especially the short, deep, bluish-purple, perchlike species, which is known locally by the Miskito name *tuba* (S.: *pahwa*, *pahawa*, *pāū*), are generally killed with bow and arrow. (See Hunting and Fighting Implements.) Two allied fishes, the moga (M. and S.: *moba*) and the guapote (M.: *sahsiñ;* S.: *musa*), are also killed in this manner.

The fishermen will sit entire hours at the waterside, keeping up continually a low, plaintive whistling, which is said to entice the fish within arrow shot. This requires great patience, a quality of which the Indian is not lacking, especially when it comes to hunting and fishing. The point of the arrow is held sometimes a foot deep in the water. At the approach of a fish the arrow goes off quick as lightning, and it rarely misses the mark. On account of its feather-light shaft it returns again to the surface and the fish is easily seized. This exercise is extremely difficult, as the true position of the fish is not the one in which it appears to sight, but it varies with the distance of the fish, with the latter's depth in the water, and upon the reflection of the light. In case the fisherman misses the arrow will return to the surface with the same degree as it had been shot down.

[278] FISH "POISONING."—Fish are also caught by "poisoning" the water of small creeks. For this purpose the Indians utilize several vines, especially *Seriania inebrians* (M.: *basala;* T., P.,: *wana;* U.: *wahnari*); in Central America all of these varieties are known by the Quichua name "barbasco" or the Aztec "amol" (amolli). The vine is crushed with flat stones or wooden clubs, in order to release the poisonous milky juice. At a narrow part the creek has been barred by a sort of weir or fence made of sticks, stones, or branches in the form of an angle with the point in the middle of the stream. At some distance above this spot the crushed plant is thrown in the water, and the poisonous juice will spread and stupefy all the fish in the neighborhood. The latter then float on the surface and are carried down the stream, but they are intercepted by the weir, where they are caught by the Indians standing in the water and thrown on land. Larger fishes, which are not entirely powerless, are easily harpooned in this condition. By this method enormous quantities of fish may be obtained in a short time. The smaller fishes are allowed to float away and recover in the unadulterated water below. The juice of the "barbasco" is also poisonous to man, but it does not affect the taste of fish killed or stupefied with it. This manner of fishing is widespread in both Americas.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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DYNAMITING FISH.—Fish are also caught by exploding dynamite in the deeper holes and eddies of the rivers. This is practiced chiefly by the Indians living around the mining districts, where they can easily obtain sticks of dynamite. Several severe accidents have resulted among the Indians by this manner of fishing.

FISH POTS.—Fish pots (*pispat*) of cylindrical shape are also made by the Indians nowadays of split bamboo. They are of recent introduction and there is no native name for them. At one extremity this implement has a funnel-shaped opening. The apex of the funnel points toward the center of the trap, so that the fish can easily enter it, but is unable to get out again.

OTHER METHODS OF FISHING.—A very peculiar method of fishing is sometimes employed in order to catch certain species which have the habit of leaping out of the water when they believe themselves persecuted by other fishes. The Indians paddle slowly along the bank of the river, rocking the boat as violently as they can, at the same time making much noise by beating the bank with their paddles. The fish, leaping in terror out of the water, will fall in the canoe, and are killed immediately, so as to prevent them from escaping by another leap. This method was observed by Ferdinand Columbus in 1502 on the Atlantic coast of Panama; the natives used to catch in that way a small fish described as "pilchard." The canoe was provided with a screen erected longitudinally from bow to stern. The terrorized fish, upon leaping out of the water, struck against the screen and fell into the bottom of the canoe.

It happens not infrequently that, while rowing over shoals of fish after the breeding season, the stroke of the paddles may cause the fish to jump out of the water and land in the canoe. The common mullet, an excellent food fish, resembling the herring, which is found in large shoals in the lagoons and larger rivers, is easily caught during still, dark nights, by paddling noiselessly along and then suddenly striking the side of the boat violently with the paddle. A gigantic species of mullet, called *kukkale* by the Indians, likewise has the habit of jumping out of the water on hearing any sudden noise. This fish does not take the bait and readily jumps out of a net.

During the dry season fish are easily caught in the old river beds or lagoons, which may be found all along the larger rivers, for all these streams are changing their course constantly. During the rainy season the water from the main river flows in these lagoons, but in summer the reverse is the case. These old river beds are then the favorite fishing grounds of women and children. They dam up a shallow portion thereof and then bail out the water in order to seize the fishes caught therein. Should a cold rain occur during low water the temperature of these water sheets will be reduced considerably, relatively speaking, and many fishes die from exposure to the cold.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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226 At night torchlights are used to attract the fish and induce them to rise to the surface, where they are killed by a stroke with the machete; the latter weapon is also used to chop the "sleeping" fishes, which are easily detected with the torches.

Along the river banks and among the rocks the Indians also "feel" for certain fishes and for crustacea.

[262] 225 CATCHING ALLIGATORS.—The tail part of young alligators and crocodiles is also occasionally eaten. These ugly reptiles are caught with the aid of large hooks. Young (61) gives the following account of the manner practiced by the Sumu to catch these repulsive creatures but, needless to say, this applies only to young specimens: "A Sumu Indian, when he sees an alligator near the banks of the river, will boldly swim under water, carrying a native-manufactured rope with a noose in it, until he reaches the creature; he will then dexterously affix the noose to its leg; his companions at the same moment, having hold of the other end of the rope, pull it vigorously, and the alligator is speedily drawn out and despatched."

226 CRUSTACEA AND MOLLUSKS.—Lobsters, crabs, and mollusks (conchs, large whelks, mussels, oysters) are also gathered by the women, and form an important item of food. In the larger lagoons two kinds of edible oysters are common; the smaller one, or mangrove oyster, attaches itself to the roots of the mangrove tree, while the larger one occurs in banks in certain parts of the lagoons.

172 A small bivalve mollusk, known locally as "cockle" (M. and S.: *ãhi*), appears to have played in former days an enormous rôle in the food supply. A number of refuse heaps, up to 20 feet in height, consisting of cockle shells intermingled with fragments of domestic utensils of stone, bone, or pottery, have been discovered on the western shore of Bluefields Lagoon. Two of such *tumuli* were examined by the writer on Cucra Point in 1921. They consisted nearly exclusively of the above-mentioned small cockle shell, which mollusk is found in the shallow water of the lagoon. Oyster shells were rare, although extensive oyster banks exist also in certain parts of the Bluefields Lagoon. These shell mounds (shell heaps, kitchen middens, kitchen débris), called also by the Danish word *kjøkkenmødding*, indicate undoubtedly old dwelling sites; from their great size it is evident that long periods of time must have been required for their accumulation. A number of them were also found at the site of Bluefields and likewise a little to the north; they have been carried away to "metal" the streets of that town. See also Bell (a: 260; b: 18), Wickham (b: 251–252), and Spinden (532–533).

226 777 FISHING CHARMS.—Certain charms are said to be very efficacious at fishing. Stones found in the stomach of fishes are highly valued, as their possessor will have good luck in catching that particular species of fish. Heads and spines from the larger species are also

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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kept in the hut for that purpose. When the Indians catch the palometa fish (M. and S.: *trisu*), they return to the water with the bones and throw them in the same spot, believing that by so doing they will always be favored with good luck when fishing for palometa. In case a woman *enciente* eats this fish, however, it will not bite any more during that season.

HUNTING AND FIGHTING IMPLEMENTS

Weapons naturally play a great rôle among primitive people, for they are used to defend themselves against the wild animals of the forest as well as against their own kind, which is even more dangerous than the beasts of the jungle. Nowadays they are not used any longer in warfare, for the various tribes are at peace, but they still furnish the Indians with the means of procuring a large share of their food supply.

DEFENSIVE WEAPONS.—Defensive weapons have gone out of existence since intertribal wars have ceased, but in former days the Miskito employed round shields (*kabaika*) of light wood or of tapir hide. Armors of plaited reed are also reported; they were covered with jaguar skin and ornamented with feathers. The northern Miskito used a breastplate of twisted cotton like that of the Mexicans (Bancroft: I, 723).

BLOWGUN.—The blowpipe or blowgun is said to be still found among the Ulwa of Rio Escondido, but the present writer was unable to obtain any details pertaining to that arm. Lehmann (c: I, 503), however, gives the name *makar* (compare Bribri *mákol*) for the blowgun among the Ulwa of Rio Murra, a northern affluent of Rio Escondido. According to Bell (b: 232) the Indian children had little blowguns to blow little balls of black wax through, in order to kill wasps, butterflies, and small house lizards. They were made from a reed, called *brasirpi*, the joints of which are about 1½ feet in length.

The use of the blowgun as a hunting and fighting implement would necessarily point to an acquaintance with arrow poison. In fact, Benito Garret y Arlovi in a report from the year 1711 (Peralta, b: 59) states that some of the Miskito used arrow poison. Bancroft (I, 722–723) says that these Indians employed the juice of the manchineel tree (*Hippomane mancinella* L.) to poison arrows and darts, but he fails to indicate the source of his information. It is well known that the Chocó and Tule (Cuna, San Blas) Indians of Panama, like the Caribs of the Lesser Antilles, poisoned their arrows in former days by dipping them in the milky juice of that tree. I have not seen the tree in question on the Mosquito Coast, nor learned its native name; Ziock (69, 237), however, calls it *liwakumya* in the Miskito

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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241 Maize is believed to be unimportant except in the higher lands, e.g., among the *Ulva*. The *Jicaque* grow it as a commercial crop but do not use it extensively as food. Pineapples are important to the *Paya*. Chili peppers and opuntia, the latter used for raising cochineal, a dye-producing insect, appear to be recent introductions. Plants introduced by the Europeans vary in importance, but plantain is now one of the most basic foods of the region. Quantities of wild foods of all kinds form an important part of the diet.

411 **Hunting.**—The bow and arrow was once important to many tribes but has been partially or wholly replaced by the gun. The bow has not been reported from the Corn Islands. Spears or javelins were formerly used for hunting. Slings, traps, and snares were used prinicipally for birds. For the blowgun, see page 224.

241 LIST OF FOODS GROWN BY THE PEOPLE IN THE CARIBBEAN LOWLANDS:

262 AMERICAN ORIGIN:

Sweet manioc.
Bitter manioc.
Maize.
Pejivalle (pejibaye) palm.
Sweetpotato.
Eddoe (tania).
Gourd.
Pumpkin.
Squash.
Chayote.
Tomato.
Bean (red and black).
Pineapple.
Tobacco.
Cotton.
Achiote (*Bixa orellana*).
Cacao.
Pataste.
Papaya.
Avocado.
Guava.
Chirimoya.
Zapote.
Coconut.
Usi.
Ficus.
Yam.
Opuntia.
Peanuts.

FOREIGN ORIGIN:

Rice.
Sugarcane.
Coffee.
Mango.
Breadfruit.
Tamarind.
Citrus fruits.
Plantain.
Banana.

224 Hunting is exclusively a male occupation. Communal hunts lasting several days and hunting by torchlight have been reported. Dogs are used frequently to chase the game. Hunters may imitate the calls of animals, sometimes using bone whistles.

226 **Fishing.**—Women fish with hooks, which were originally made of bone. Men fish in groups of varying sizes. Fish are shot with the bow and arrow, speared with single- or multipronged spears, taken with traps of various types, or frightened so that they jump into canoes. Torches are used at night to attract the fish. Fish are poisoned by parties of men. Women and men whose wives are pregnant or menstruating cannot join such expeditions (*Jicaque*). Rotenone-bearing plants are crushed in the water above a weir from which the stupefied fish are removed.

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2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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Harpoons with floats attached are used for large fish and for manatees, the latter being taken in the lagoons and at sea. Harpoons with long retrieving lines but without floats are used for sea turtles. The *Sumo* lasso young crocodiles.

Domesticated animals.—No early source mentions dogs, but they are now common. Pigs, sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and cats have been introduced. The people tame a great variety of wild birds and several species of mammals. The latter are even suckled by the women. Species of native bees are kept in hives near the houses.

Food preparation.—Food may be boiled, sometimes in coconut milk. Meat and fish are broiled or roasted in hot ashes, and fish may be fried in coconut oil. The *Paya* fry green pineapple. Salt is used as a condiment but rarely as a preservative. Sauces of red peppers, lime, and salt are made by the *Mosquito*. The *Paya* use chili as a sauce or as a substitute for other food. Tamales are made of manioc. Maize dough, sometimes soured (*Mosquito*), is wrapped in leaves and baked. This and manioc dough may be made into tortillas, an item introduced into the region only in recent years. Manioc is made into bread, which is baked in the open fire.

Numerous beverages are made of liana sap, maize, honey, green plantains, and the like. Some of these are made of a sour paste, which is diluted with water before it is eaten. Such food is usually carried while traveling. Alcoholic beverages are prepared in canoes (*Mosquito*) or log troughs (*Paya*) and stored in earthenware pots. Fermentation is hastened in various ways, notably by chewing uncooked or cooked maize or manioc and spitting it into the mixture.

Preserving and storage of food.—Fish is dried in the sun and meat is dried on a three-legged babracot. The *Mosquito* make a mixture of green bananas and pejibaye palm nuts which may be kept for 6 months or longer. It can be made into a beverage or baked as bread. The *Sumo* preserve boiled maize by steeping it in lye to remove the hull and then burying it. The *Sumo* also make up large parcels of maize or peeled bananas, which are placed in running water until partially fermented, then dried in the sun. Live turtles are kept in stockades in shallow water.

VILLAGES AND HOUSES

Mosquito villages (pl. 35, *bottom*) had between 100 and 500 inhabitants. *Sumo* villages appear to have been much smaller. Formerly, communal houses, called "palenques," had compartments for each family. Some were about 40 by 80 feet (about 12.5 by 25 m.); smaller communal houses were built by the *Mosquito*. *Sumo* houses had an elaborately carved central post. House plans were rectangular, the ends being rounded, elliptical (*Paya*), or circular (*Mosquito* of Honduras). At the present

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
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MEAT FOODS

226 A very large share of food is obtained from the sea, the lagoons, and the rivers. Larger fish are caught by throwing a spear or javelin, smaller ones with hooks or nets. Previous to the introduction of steel, the Indians fashioned their spear heads from bamboo, which was easily cut into barbs. A cord is attached to the point whereas the shaft is a solid light wood. With this device they spear the carp-like snook and the tarpon. At night fish are attracted by the use of a pitch pine torch and are also speared; turtles are harpooned. Fish are sometimes caught by "poisoning" the water. For this purpose the Indians utilize several vines; usually one which has been identified as *Seriania inebrians*. The vine is crushed with flat stones to release the poisonous milky juice. A creek is temporarily dammed and at some distance above the dam the crushed plant is thrown into de water, the fish are quickly paralyzed and are then caught by the Indians. Large fish are easily harpooned when in this condition. Smaller fish are allowed to float away and recover when they reach unpolluted water. Bows and arrows are rarely used today for fishing purposes but near mining centers fish are often dynamited; this process is to be condemned since it destroys the majority of the smaller fish.

[225] The tails of young alligators and crocodiles are occasionally eaten. Lobsters, crabs, and mollusks form an important item of food. In general, the rivers and lagoons afford an ever present, easily obtainable source of food.

224 With muzzle loading and other equally out-of-date shotguns, the Indians hunt game. Spears, bows, and arrows are occasionally used but the blowgun is no longer used. Game is found in abundance along the margins of the rivers. Deer, Peccary, spider monkey and capuchin monkey, tapir, lizards and a variety of birds, including parrots, red-spoonbills, curasows, mountain hens, quail, partridge, pigeons and a number of wild ducks, are used for food. In addition to the wild game, the Indians raise and eat some domestic cattle, pigs and chikens. There is no lack of meat of one form of another. It is often preserved by drying and smoking it for several days over a dull fire, since the humidity is too high for sun drying. Salt is used sparingly by the Indians.

FOOD PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION

373 Fire is a necessity for cooking, for without it the Indians would have to subsist on raw foods. Fire is produced by twirling a hardwood stick in a notch of wild cane. When smoke appears a piece of wild